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First MH-60S aircrew virtual environmental trainer ready for training

Naval Aircrew man Helicopter 3rd Class Alfredo Robles participates in simulated weapons training using the MH-60S Aircrew Virtual Environment Trainer (AVET), the Navy's first virtual reality device. The trainer, located at Naval Air Station North Island, San Diego, Calif., is ready for training. U.S. Navy photo.

NAVAL AIR SYSTEMS COMMAND, PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – The first U.S. Navy virtual reality device, the MH-60S Aircrew Virtual Environmental Trainer (AVET), located at Naval Air Station North Island, San Diego, Calif., is ready for training.

The stand-alone, reconfigurable, full-motion simulator supports aerial gunnery; search and rescue; cargo replenishment training; confined area landings; and emergency procedures training for the MH-60S Knighthawk and HH-60H SeaHawk aircrew.

"The AVET's advanced technologies are an important step forward in creating a realistic operational environment for H-60 aircrew," said Capt. John Feeney, Naval Aviation Training Systems Program Office (PMA-205) program manager. "In the future, our plan is to network this trainer with the tactical operational flight trainers for multi-crew mission rehearsal training. With this networking, fleet squadrons will be able to achieve readiness at a substantial cost savings."

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Binghamton Simulator Company, Binghamton, N.Y., as a small business innovation research program, developed the training device. BSC worked with experts from PMA-205 and Naval Air Warfare Center, Training Systems Division, Orlando, Fla., to design and create the prototype that was sent to the fleet for evaluation. Once the assessment was complete, BSC incorporated the recommended changes, enhancing the overall accuracy and efficiency of the trainer.

Instead of a large visual screen seen in most H-60 trainers, the AVET allows each student to have his own headset, where he sees the images. Known as the helmet-mounted display (HMD) visual system, this equipment mounts directly to student's helmet providing a 360-degree visual of the aircraft's exterior and interior.

"There are three aircrew stations available. The instructor can perform as a simulated pilot to assist with multiple student performance initiatives. Using the HMD, crews can rehearse with six different weapons configurations," said Rick McKay, PMA-205 H-60 in-service integrated product team lead.

The H-60 platform consists of medium-lift, transport helicopters. Each variant has a mission-specific design to support combat search and rescue, insertion and recovery of special operations personnel, anti-surface and anti-submarine warfare, cargo replenishment and/or medical evacuation.

"With the implementation of the AVET into the H-60 training continuum, the platform is on the cutting edge of modeling and simulation," said McKay.